Galatea Resurrects #9 (A Poetry Engagement)

Presenting engagements (including reviews) of poetry projects. Some issues also offer Featured Poets selected primarily by guest editors, a "The Critic Writes Poems" series, and/or Feature Articles.

Sunday, March 30, 2008

BEAMS by ADAM FIELED
JEFFREY SIDE Reviews

***Beams* by Adam Fieled**
(BlazeVOX, Buffalo, N.Y., 2007. Available for download at ***http://www.blazevox.org/ebook.htm****)*

Beams by Adam Fieled is an e-book from Blazevox. It is a multifaceted work that is both formally and typographically inventive, as well as being linguistically intriguing. To do full justice to the poetry in this volume would require a much longer and detailed review of essay length; such is the complexity and multifaceted nature of this work. So all I will attempt in this review is to isolate certain features that can be readily recognised.

Beams comprises four titled sections: 'Beams', 'Apparition Poems', 'Madame Psychoses', and 'Virtual Pinball' (this latter being composed with poet Lars Palm). Each of these sections contain poems stylistically different to those of the other sections. An important aspect to the 'Beams' section is Fieled's poetic aesthetic regarding it. The poems in it represent his concept of the poetic "beam". The following is an extract from his exposition of this poetic, which can be read at **http://artrecess2.blogspot.com/2005/08/beam-hypothesis.html**:
[A beam is] a short poem, 8-20 lines [not] necessarily impersonal or personal, but it must transcend mere subjectivity […] single lines interspersed function as "beams of light". They're pure shots into poetic space, flashes of imagery, insight, gist-phrasing, etc. Light-beams illuminate built-beams [ie architectural structures], built-beams support and buttress light-beams. Together, they posit the BEAM as a kind of "light-house" or "light-structure".

The manifestation of this poetic aesthetic in the 'Beams' section applies to all of its poems, but other aspects tangentially related also pertain, particularly where colour (light) and matter (objects) are made to amalgamate in such a way as to produce an almost iridescent affect which draws attention to the "variability" that underlies phenomena (according to quantum theory). The aesthetic result is that material objects are seen to display less than palpable qualities: light becomes semi-palpable in 'Creep' (p.7) were it is described as 'Sponge-light', and in 'Leaves' (p.12) matter becomes semi-iridescent:

Leaves tonight are leaning
spots of light […]

The use of such affects serves to give us a sense of the underlying subatomic volatility that forms the objects of the observed world. It has a sort of Blakean sense whereby the visible world is seen to envelop a subtler one. The world is not all it seems to be. In doing this with words, Fieled makes almost tangible to our senses what can but remain only rational inference if we are reliant on same from a study of quantum physics. No small achievement for a poet.

However, the poems are not limited to such affects. They also manage to concisely represent the vicissitudes of human experience in all their variations. In 'Razor' (p.8) we find lines such as,
edged like needle-scars along arm-veins
everything I can't puncture is there

which in association with the lines,
bottoms grow hardened from rubs
& sharpness be a baby's candy

not only produce an interesting juxtaposition, but also represent birth and death. They suggest the bitterness, regret, and frustration that is the lot of humanity, yet they also suggest hope in that we become hardened in order for that suffering to become almost as acceptable to us as candy is to a baby.

Throughout this collection, a recurring motif relating to sexual struggle is evident. In 'Sex Hex' (p.9) we have a deft account of man's unremitting desire for sexual fulfilment described in almost "biological determinist" terms, yet alluding to the nuances inherent in any discussion of male dominance within a given society, as is suggested by the mention of Foucault:
take her up, stroke her belly
she'll think of Foucault

The biological controlling impulses of the male driven to physical action is counter-balanced by the cerebral passivity of the female who, by thinking of Foucault, both gives in to the male's seduction ploy but also demonstrates an intellectuality that is not evident in the male at this particular moment in their relationship.

The problematical relationship between the sexes is further evinced in terms of consciousness in the 'Madame Psychoses' section. In 'Sarah Israel' (p.33) we see how memory almost reinvents or remodels the past regarding a yearned for "other":
I saw her in a seeing not seen by any eye,
& the "I" that saw, saw my eye not at all.

Here, identity and perception become entwined as the punning of ‘eye’ with ‘I’ demonstrates. This punning acts as a poetic device to illustrate the very real inextricable union that identity and perception must necessarily have. It is a union so binding that the two become mutually exclusive causing the poet confusion as he struggles to wade his way through something of solipsist maze. In ‘Paula’ (p.37) we see the ultimate expression of male sexual and emotional yearning that represents the lot of Everyman:

chaos, order, clipped bird-like into
wings & cries. I could only ever
think; paula. all the thrusts &
pumps that could never be. "all"
that must be withheld, & that
it might be better that way.

you gave me the gift; savouring
wanting. how it really was you
I wanted. not a body but a soul.
I tell myself I've "been through
you", forever & never. zero here,
same as two. empty.saturated. dark

I have quoted the entire poem. Such is its universality pertaining to male desire any commentary by me would be more than superfluous. Indeed, it would not be outlandish to suggest that in this poem Fieled has articulated more than John Donne allowed himself to in those poems of Donne’s that evince similar concerns.

*****

Jeffrey Side studied English Language and Literature at Liverpool and Leeds universities. He is editor of *The Argotist Online*, and has reviewed poetry for various print and online journals including *Stride magazine, Shearsman magazine* and *Acumen magazine*. He has had poetry published in various magazines such as *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and on poetry web sites such as *Underground Window, A Little Poetry, Poethia, nthposition, eratio, Ancient Heart, Lily, Big Bridge, Jacket, Textimagepoem, Apochryphaltext, 9th St. Laboratories, hutt, ken*again, The Dande Review, Poetry Bay, Dusie* and *CybpherAnthology*.

Posted by EILEEN at **9:58 PM**

No comments:

Galatea Resurrects #18 (A Poetry Engagement)

Presenting engagements (including reviews) of poetry books & projects. Some issues also offer Featured Poets, a "The Critic Writes Poems" series, and/or Feature Articles.

Thursday, May 10, 2012

A poem from WHEN YOU BIT ... by ADAM FIELED

JOHN BLOOMBERG-RISSMAN Reviews

"Three Sets of Teeth" in When You Bit … by Adam Fieled
(Otoliths, Rockhampton, Australia, 2008)

I chose this poem for three reasons:

1) First poem in the book;

2) Since the title of the book is *When you bit …*, a poem with teeth in the title seemed appropriate;

3) I used to know a guy with two sets of teeth. So the title resonated.

The poem's a sonnet; this is a book of sonnets. It's a very musical sonnet. There are end-rhymes, rhymes mid-line, near/off rhymes, and other kinds of musics, too. So it's quite possible to read this poem on a sonic level, which smoothes out the "argument", so to speak. I'm at the end before you know it. Without realizing I've just passed thru a series of complexities …

Tho that's not quite true. At one point, the music is quite harshly consonantal, which stops me dead in my tracks: "that cuts. We are sluts." That initial c … those following t's … not to mention the guttural rhyme … Something is going on here. I should pause over it. So let's go back, a little more slowly this time.

"Three Sets of Teeth. / / Three sets of teeth: who / can check for cavities?" As noted above, when I read this title I thought of the guy with two sets of teeth and wondered whether someone had three. There's nothing in these first two lines to suggest otherwise. In fact, "who / can check for cavities?" had me picturing an incredibly crowded mouth and a really tripped-out dentist. The next two-three lines (remember, this is my 2nd time thru …) disabuse me that we're talking about one mouth here. Which leaves me puzzling over "who / can check for cavities?" Once I realize that three mouths are involved, the crazed dentist image disappears. Which leaves me with the possibility that we're dealing with a pun on "cavities", and perhaps the first thoughts of the love-fest to come.

"A three-way circuit: who / will start the striptease?" Erotic tension, with a decision to act upon it. But it is a little nerve-wracking to get these things going. Someone has to unbutton the first button.

“Three lovers in three ways: / how merrily the dance / begins. We spin, we spin,” Apparently the first (and last) buttons are undone and the loving begins. With great joy and pleasure, apparently. “Three lovers in three ways” is an interesting locution; it could indicate any number of things, e.g., the relationships between the three differ; each lover has hir own kinks; the positions (and “cavities”) vary; or it could simply mean that this is a three-way. Or any number of other things, none of which are specified.

“we forget our instincts, / anima, the part of teeth / that cuts.” Uh, oh, trouble in Paradise. I’m not sure exactly what has gone wrong. Has jealousy arisen (is it considered here as an instinct?) Or, if not jealousy, some other problem?

(I google “anima sex” and google gives me “animal sex”, and “anime sex” which I’m sure – which I have no doubt – are interesting, but they don’t seem particularly apposite here …).

Anyway.

In Jungian psychology, the anima is the feminine within the male (that little yin dot within the yang). According to Wikipedia,

Jung believed anima development has four distinct levels, which he named *Eve, Helen, Mary and Sophia*. In broad terms, the entire process of anima development in a male is about the male subject opening up to emotionality, and in that way a broader spirituality, by creating a new conscious **paradigm** that includes intuitive processes, creativity and imagination, and psychic sensitivity towards himself and others where it might not have existed previously.

It seems possible that insufficient development of the anima has rendered some aspect of this three-way problematic. But it’s impossible to tell what has gone wrong, exactly. All we know is that, however wonderful the dance, at a certain point it ends up with

“We are sluts.” I don’t quite know how instinct, anima, and “the part of teeth / that cuts” has led to this conclusion. After all, feeling like a slut is an internalization of culture, not of instinct, etc.

Unless. Unless. Unless there is NO trouble in paradise, and the forgetting of instinct, anima, etc somehow leads one to triumph in one’s sluttishness. Tho I have to admit that I don’t know how that happens, either.

“There is an “I” here that / stands for all of us, but / its eyes are shut. Sleep / lulls it to rest, not think. Or speak.” Is the “I” that stands for all of us the Jungian unconscious? I don’t know, I don’t want to read too much into the single word “anima”. “[A]ll of us” could simply mean the three participants, who have been satisfied into unconsciousness. Unconsciousness that is utterly silent, utterly without need for self-expression, dead to the world, inside and out. That’s one hell of a fine satisfaction.

The depth of the sleep leads me to favor the interpretation of the sluts bit given two paragraphs above. But somehow the fact that the “shut” eyes have to do with “cuts” and “sluts” still troubles me, since I don’t have a solid reading of that bit. Perhaps it’s not an either/or; it could be a both/and.

*****

John Bloomberg-Rissman is somewhere towards middle of *In the House of the Hangman*, the third section of his maybe life project called *Zeitgeist Spam* (picture Hannah Hoch painting over

the Sistine Chapel) The first two volumes have been published: *No Sounds of My Own Making*, and *Flux, Clot & Froth*. In addition to his *Zeitgeist Spam* project, he has edited or co-edited two anthologies, *1000 Views of 'Girl Singing'* and *The Chained Hay(na)ku Project*, and is at work on a third, which he is editing with Jerome Rothenberg. He is also deep into two important collaborations, one with Richard Lopez, one with Anne Gorrick. By important he means "important to him". Anyone else want to collaborate? He blogs at **Zeitgeist Spam**.

Posted by EILEEN at **7:15 PM**

Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to Facebook